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Provisional

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Wednesday, 24 March 2004, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. De La Sablière	(France)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Dumitru
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Ms. Menéndez
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Negroponte

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2004/230)

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04-28064 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2004/230)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan), took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Annabi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2004/230, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Hédi Annabi, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

I now give the floor to Mr. Annabi.

Mr. Annabi: As you have just said, Sir, members of the Council have before them the latest report of the Secretary-General, which describes in some detail the recent developments in Afghanistan.

On 15 January, members of the Council received a comprehensive briefing from Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi on the adoption of the new Constitution — the most significant step of the Bonn political process completed during the reporting period. I will therefore not cover the same ground. What I intend to do, Sir, with your permission, is to use this opportunity to brief the Council in broad terms on the challenges that remain in implementing the Bonn Agreement, as well as the measures which will lead to the further transition of Afghanistan towards stability and effective governance.

After 26 months of steady progress in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement's political agenda, the process has now reached one of its last major benchmarks: the holding of free and fair elections. The purpose of these elections is to confer political legitimacy on the new Government. This legitimacy alone is not sufficient, however, and it is therefore essential that the processes of reconstruction and the building of State institutions accelerate. To equip the new Government with the tools essential for effective governance — viable, accountable and representative State institutions that can ensure security and establish a credible base for the development of the country — further progress is required in the implementation of security sector reform.

The ratification of the Constitution has helped focus attention on the last remaining political undertaking of the Bonn Agreement: the registration of voters and the holding of credible elections. The Constitution, by defining a system of government, also clarified the types of elections that will eventually have to take place. The Constitution requires elections for the presidency and for the upper and lower houses of the national assembly. The upper house — the Meshrano Jirga or House of Elders — raises some particularly difficult issues. Two thirds of the upper house delegates are to be elected from district and provincial councils. This means that district and provincial councils must be elected. Only then can there be elections from among the members of these councils to determine who the members of the upper house shall be.

The complexities of carrying out multi-level, simultaneous elections in Afghanistan's current circumstances are enormous. Not least of these complexities is the fact that credible population figures for all provinces are not yet available and a number of district boundaries remain under dispute. Nonetheless, the Constitution states that "every effort shall be made" to hold these elections simultaneously. Every effort is being made. Attention in Kabul is focused on this task and we hope that a decision will be made in the very near future on the timing and sequence of the elections. We are very hopeful that this can happen before the Berlin conference next week.

The lack of absolute clarity on this question today will no doubt be frustrating to some. In the early days of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Brahimi used to caution this Council that Afghanistan needs to "make haste slowly". This paradox is especially true for elections. On the one hand, we understand the urgency of holding elections as close as possible to the Bonn time frame. On the other hand, holding elections is not, as Mr. Brahimi has also said many times, like making instant coffee. The conditions must be conducive and the preparations must be thorough for the effect of elections to be positive and for the elections themselves to be seen as free and fair.

Another paradox we have faced is the need to work closely with the Afghans while recognizing that there are few Afghans with electoral experience. The Afghan Government and UNAMA have addressed this by adopting a co-responsibility management model, which has been defined in a presidential decree issued on 18 February. This decree creates an Electoral Secretariat in which international electoral experts are paired with Afghan counterparts at the management level. This will allow Afghan capacity to be built as electoral activities are implemented.

At the implementation level, around 40,000 Afghans will be trained to manage 4,700 polling sites on election day, when the United Nations will verify the work of the registration and polling teams, which will be composed entirely of Afghans. The Electoral Secretariat will implement the instructions of the Joint Electoral Management Body, whose mandate was extended on 18 February to cover elections as well as registration. Members of the Council will recall that the JEMB is composed of six independent Afghan electoral commissioners and five international electoral experts.

Since its formation in July 2003, the Afghan commissioners have been working with the international experts and have acquired a great deal of knowledge about electoral systems and operations. The Joint Electoral Management Body will take the lead role in deciding, based on technical criteria, when elections will take place, and it will be responsible for the preparation, conduct and oversight of those elections.

In the meantime, the first phase of the registration process has progressed more or less on target. As indicated in the report, this phase, which covers the eight main cities in Afghanistan, will continue until early April. As of yesterday, 1.56 million voters out of an estimated 1.9 million eligible voters in those cities have registered. Of those, around 28 per cent are women. More detailed information is provided in the handout that I understand is being distributed to members of the Council.

What this information suggests, however, is that we are therefore well placed to complete the first phase of registration as planned, especially if we can increase the registration rate of women, which UNAMA is working to achieve. I should note that one of the positive trends in recent weeks has in fact been the constant increase in the overall participation of women, though it remains far lower than we would like, especially in the southern areas of the country.

At the same time, preparations are being made to launch the second phase of the registration process, when registration teams will deploy to provincial capitals, security conditions permitting. We hope to register the remaining estimated 8 million eligible voters during this second phase. That phase is scheduled to begin on 1 May and to continue at some 4,200 sites for approximately one month. It is anticipated that, as registration is extended to cover districts which are unsafe, special attention by domestic and international forces will be required, in close coordination with the Coalition forces.

As we have stressed and must continue to stress, success in completing the registration and in holding elections will depend on support from Afghan and international security forces. We welcome the deployment of additional provincial reconstruction teams, particularly in the south, as described in the

report. We welcome also President Karzai's request to NATO to provide additional security during the election period. UNAMA is currently holding discussions with NATO on these security issues and hopes to discuss them further at the Berlin conference next week.

Success will also depend on continued and timely donor support. I am pleased to say that the financial requirements for registration are almost fully pledged. Delays, however, in actually disbursing funds to the United Nations Development Programme trust fund continue to hinder and delay procurement, staffing and planning activities. It currently takes an average of two months from the time when funds are committed to the time when they can be disbursed by the project. We urge donors to work with us to speed up the disbursement process as well as to set aside additional funds for the other phases of the electoral process and the elections themselves.

Despite a number of obstacles, the electoral process is moving forward, albeit under very difficult conditions. The next phase of registration will demand, however, an enormous increase in logistics requirements. It will also face greater security risks and complex organizational requirements. In order to succeed, we will be counting on the support of all of our partners in this extremely important process.

Let me now turn to the issue of security. As the report highlights, extremist attacks on aid agencies and on government officials continue to occur, predominately in the southern provinces, but also, in some cases, against International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops in Kabul itself. Factional feuds, rivalries and, increasingly, drug-related incidents continue to affect the lives of the population. The report notes that factional fighting has broken out in the north-east, which has traditionally been one of the safest regions of the country.

Unfortunately, recent events suggest that even areas that most observers believe are stable and safe are not immune to security problems. As members of the Council are surely aware, fierce fighting erupted in Herat on 21 March between factional forces loyal to the Provincial Governor, Ismael Khan, and troops loyal to the government-appointed commander, General Zahir. According to preliminary reports, the fighting, which has its origins in long-standing tensions between the two leaders, was ignited by a traffic accident involving some of their respective supporters.

The traffic accident was apparently interpreted as an attempt to assassinate the Governor. That interpretation, or rumour, if you like — which was false, as far as we can tell — reached the Governor's son, Mirwais Siddiq, who was the Minister for Aviation and Tourism, who then sought to use his vehicle to forcibly enter the General's residential compound. The General's guards fired at the vehicle, sparking an exchange of gunfire in which the Minister, together with Herat's head of police intelligence and the head of the counter-narcotics department, were killed. The Governor's forces then mobilized, deploying heavy weapons and firing artillery and tank- and rocket-propelled grenade rounds during a battle that lasted over six hours and which resulted in the occupation of General's Zahir's military headquarters by Governor Ismael Khan's forces. Casualty estimates vary greatly, from 20 to 100. A government delegation and additional Afghan National Army troops have been deployed to Herat. The situation is now reported to be calm, but it remains very tense.

As members of the Council will recall from their visit to the province last year, notwithstanding the Governor's de facto independence from Kabul and troublesome reports regarding human rights and the treatment of women, Herat was considered to be one of the most stable areas in Afghanistan. Indeed, the province has one of the highest voter registration rates, including female registration of some 36.8 per cent, compared to a national average so far of 28 per cent. This demonstrates that, even in an area like Herat, considered to be conducive to electoral activities, the security problem cannot be discounted.

In fact, the fighting in Herat, as well as the recent factional fighting in the north, strongly indicates that security remains an unsolved problem. In particular, more progress in the implementation of security sector reform is now required. This must include further substantive reform of the Ministries of Defence and of the Interior as well as the National Security Directorate. It must also see the implantation of a more vigorous disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme than the Ministry of Defence has so far been willing to commit itself to.

UNAMA has advocated that 100 per cent of heavy weapons should be cantoned and that 40 per cent

of Afghan militia forces be demobilized before elections proceed. Without significant demilitarization, genuine political choice, as required for a credible election, is simply impossible, and events such as those in Herat are likely to recur. However, the leadership of the affected militia will need to be convinced that the drawdown of their forces will not create an opening for their rivals. The newly created national forces that are being trained by the United States with the support of France do not yet have the necessary capacity to provide such assurances. Accordingly, the presence of international forces, including provincial reconstruction teams, remains indispensable to allay the concerns of factional leaders and to allow the DDR process to move forward.

At the same time, that presence will provide an environment in which the Afghan security forces can build capacity. That, in turn, will provide a clearer, earlier, exit strategy for the international forces. The international community, particularly NATO/ISAF and the Afghan Government, will need to work hard together towards this objective.

Past efforts to expand government authority to the provinces, including the appointment by Kabul of senior civil servants, have been hampered by the insufficient number of trained and well-equipped police. At present, a total of 4,339 officers have received training. With the additional programmes recently initiated by the German police project and United States training programmes, there should be an additional 20,000 trained officers by June this year. Given the limited number of international police trainers, we encourage the provincial reconstruction teams to consider engaging in post-deployment mentoring in support of the Ministry of the Interior.

Many members of the international community have contributed to strengthening the system of law and order through their contributions to the Law and Order Trust Fund. Almost all of the stated financial requirements were met last year. We hope that that commitment and generosity will continue this year.

At the Tokyo donor conference held in December 2001, contributions from Member States for reconstruction were solicited on the basis of a preliminary assessment of immediate and short-term reconstruction needs. Since its establishment on 19 June 2002, the Transitional Administration has progressively taken over from the United Nations the leadership and ownership of the coordination of reconstruction priorities. That is a process that we welcome, and we fully endorse the use of Afghanistan's national budget as a mechanism for coordinating assistance and reconstruction.

Looking towards the future, we are concerned — and this concern is shared by the Afghan Government — that the impact of Afghanistan's economic growth during the past two years, estimated at 30 per cent for 2002 and 20 per cent for last year, has largely been felt in the urban centres alone. This has prompted a demographic shift from rural areas to the cities, exacerbating social tensions in urban centres. In response, assistance policy has shifted from humanitarian assistance towards broader, long-term social protection programmes, so as to prepare the ground for sustained economic recovery while maintaining a safety net for the poorest and most vulnerable.

Taking into account those emerging trends, which help define long-term needs, the Government has undertaken a comprehensive analytical exercise to determine the cost of meeting its long-term recovery and reconstruction targets, including the security sector, which was not included at the Tokyo conference. The report entitled "Securing Afghanistan's Future", prepared by the Government in close consultation with its international partners, promotes a policy of broad-based economic growth that is ethnically and regionally balanced, in order to reinforce national reconciliation and peaceful political development. The exercise determined that public investment of $28.5 billion over seven years will be required for the Afghan economy to become financially viable.

However, the report recognizes that the economy will continue to be plagued by the lucrative illegal drug economy and related disputes over land ownership. The scale and continuing proliferation of the production of and trafficking in illegal narcotics has been reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in a recent survey. The survey suggests that the drug economy and the instability that it promotes remains perhaps the greatest threat to the development of a stable functioning State.

The Government's recent implementation of a robust strategy to combat narcotics, with the support of the United Kingdom as lead nation and of the coalition

forces, is encouraging. But the task, we have to say, is enormous and requires the implementation of a comprehensive policy of interdiction by Afghanistan as well as by transit and recipient States, alongside alternative livelihood options for farmers.

In conclusion, I have tried to highlight a few of the major issues that the international community will be facing in the year ahead. Many of these — and other issues, such as human rights in particular — are addressed in more detail in the Secretary-General's report. Many of these issues will also be part of the agenda at the international conference on Afghanistan's future that will take place next week in Berlin. There will be opportunity at Berlin to examine the way ahead, as well as the difficulties that Afghanistan and the international community face in fulfilling the letter and spirit of the Bonn Agreement.

Nonetheless, if we look back for a moment, we can see that the distance that has been travelled is encouraging. The United Nations remains determined to fulfil its Bonn Agreement commitments, and accordingly the Secretary-General recommends in his report that the mandate of UNAMA be extended for an additional 12 months. We hope that the Council will endorse that recommendation. We also hope that it will extend to the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, the same strong support that it always extended to his predecessor, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Annabi for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.